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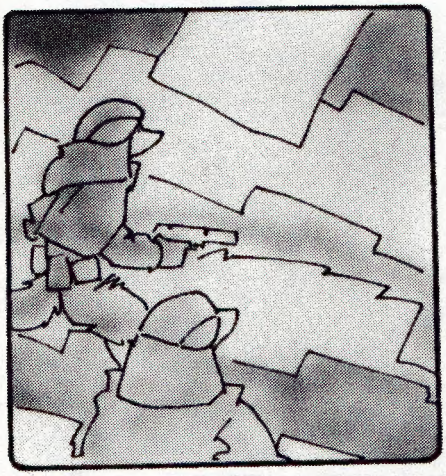
THE NEW ALBEDO

SD 197-11-07 Tadak City, Ish Tako

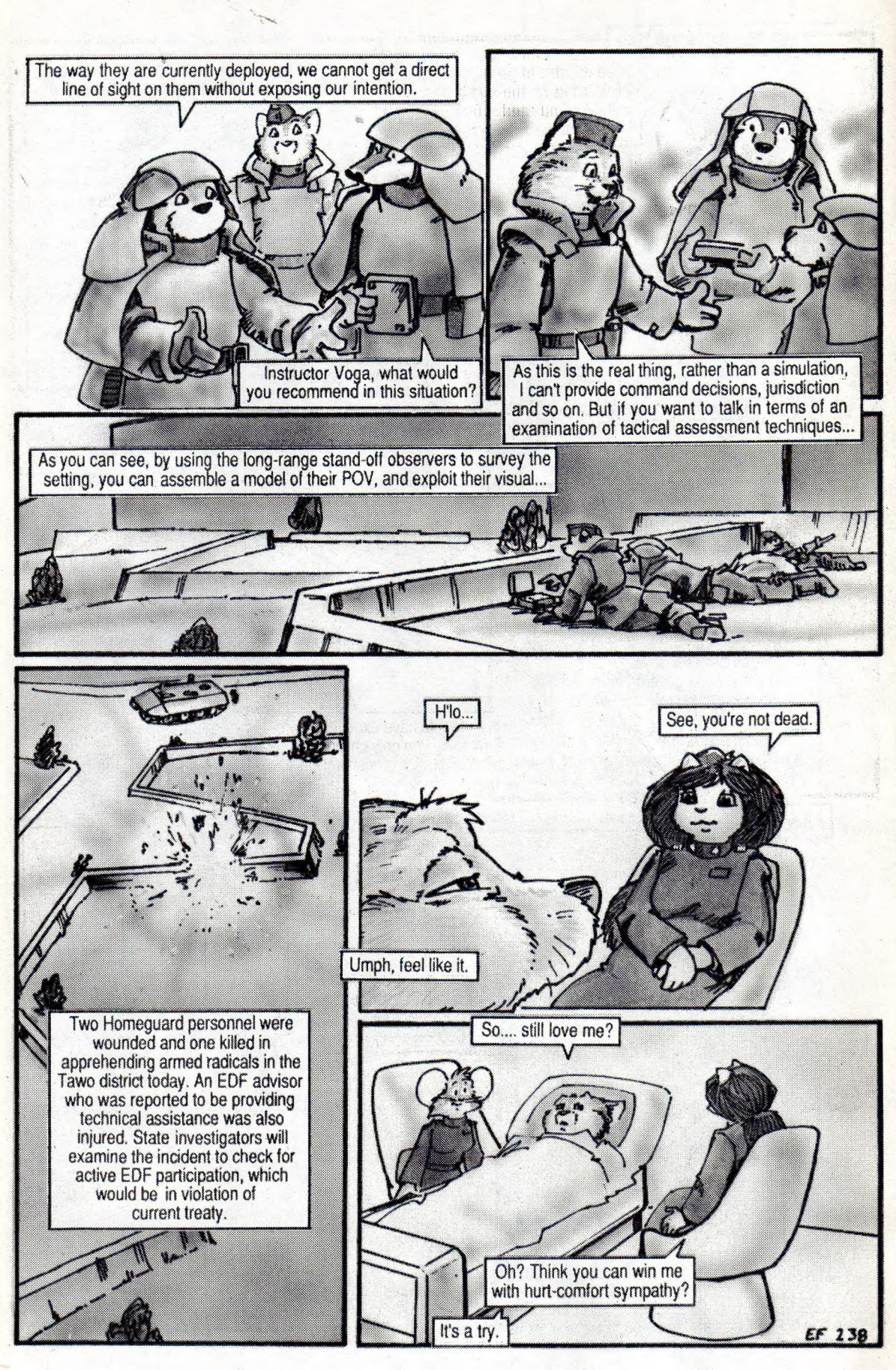
In regional news, the Taitako Revolutionary Army has suffered what may be a final defeat with the arrest of twenty-three suspects, reported to be members of the command council. The Revolutionary Army has been reduced to little more than terrorist bandits after their fall from power and ouster from the Shanko Capitol six months ago. The New Shanko People's Militia, assisted by the Apato Homeguard, have been rounding up elements of the TRA since then, capturing or killing over six hundred of the guerrillas in running battles through out the Shanko hinterlands. Meanwhile, the Ish-Tako Collective Command Authority, with the permission of Chairman Ingam of the Zan Cha Co-op, has seized the spaceware assets of Whurra Industrial Group, implicated in the attack on the Patok Allozi*. While senior executives at Whurra insist that the company was not responsible for criminal misuse of its equipment, evidence being exchanged by the ITCCA and outlying jurisdictions suggests otherwise. Allegations include providing material assistance to criminal dissident groups on Zuh-Ear and Zill, and within the inner asteroid belt.

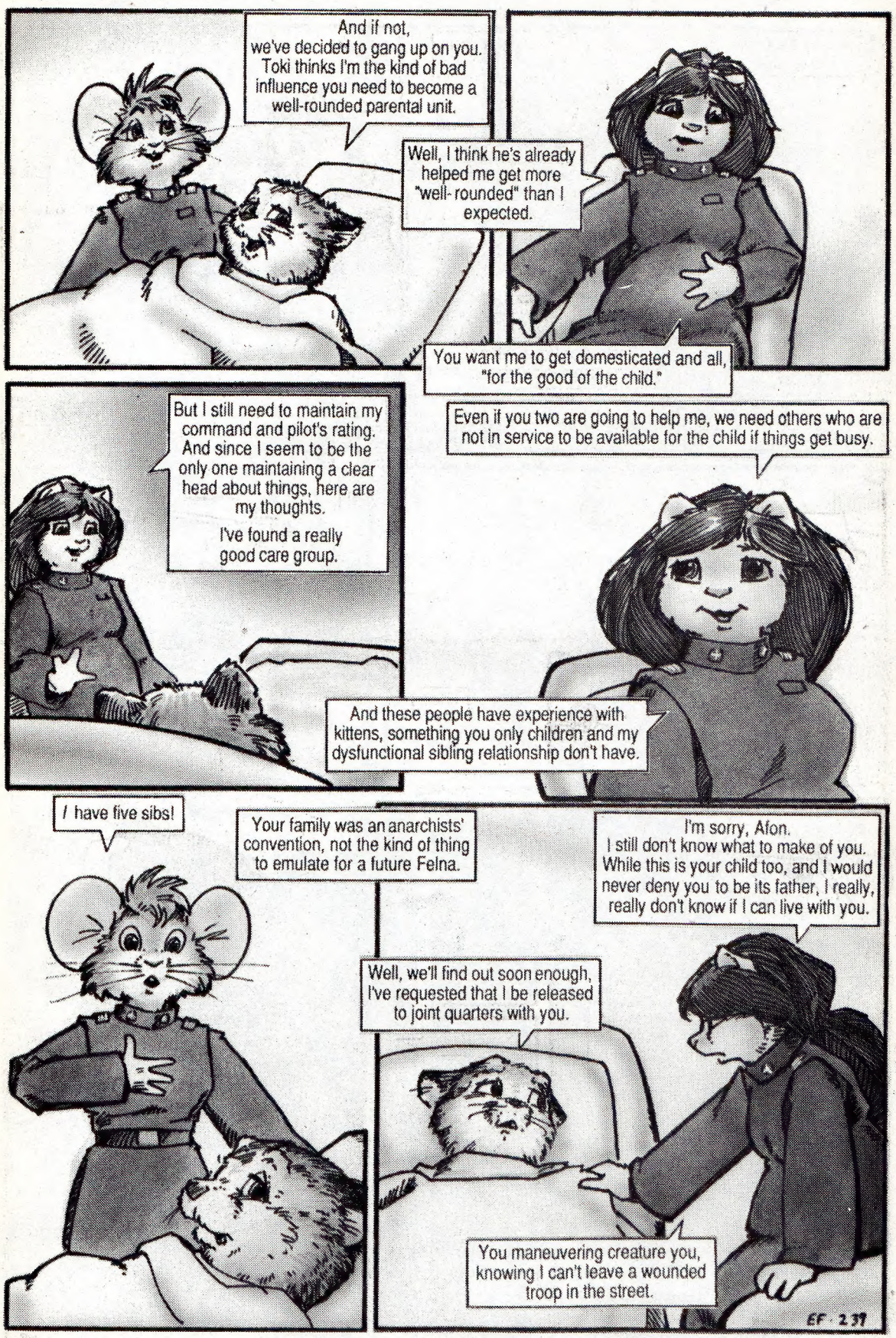
This breakthrough in interstate cooperation may spell the end of the use of force for political change, as the various regional authorities now no longer tolerate guerrilla bases within their territories. While the more radical extremists may yet attempt some kind of terrorism, the moderates are now seeking Confed mediation with the various governments. Also part of the discussion is concern over covert state terrorism, like that of the Zeri-Echanni Death Squads, and the proposal of an impartial, system-wide security monitoring to safeguard against it. While several states are adamantly opposed, the majority are at least willing to discuss it.

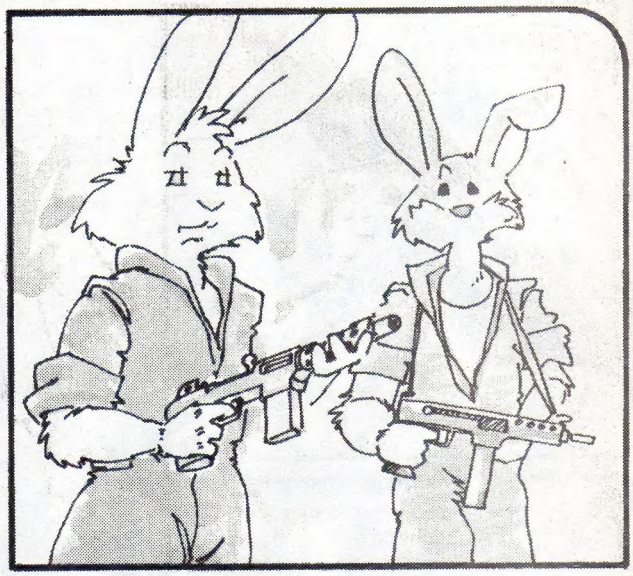


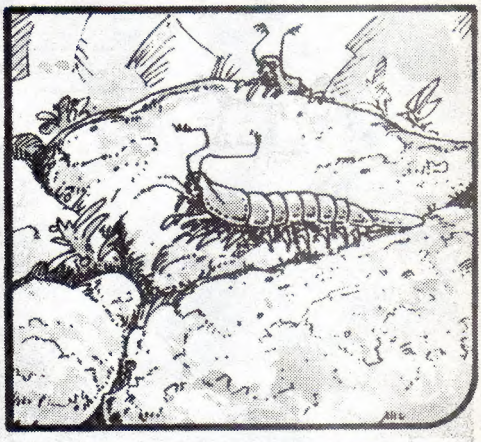
A late-breaking local story:
Tadak Homeguards are now closing in on armed suspects in the Tawo neighborhood. Shots and explosions have been reported, but no details of who these individuals are or what their intentions might be.

*The Patok Allozi was the star ship Erma was on, which was attacked coming into the system.

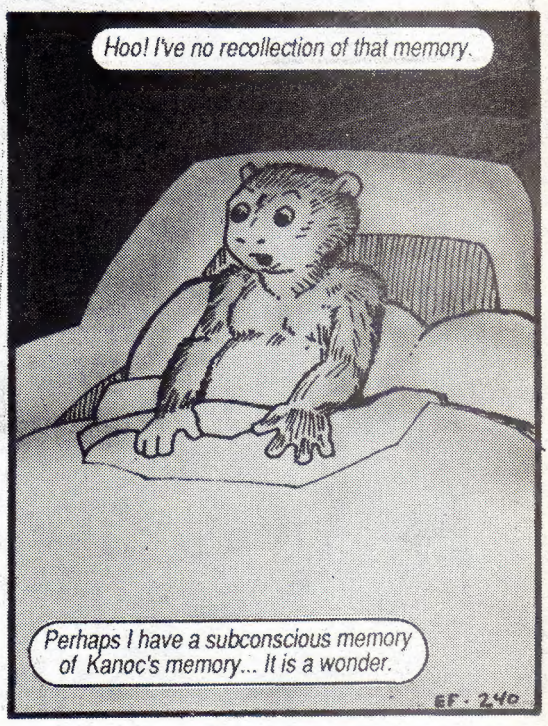

The way they are currently deployed, we cannot get a direct line of sight on them without exposing our intention.
Instructor Voga, what would you recommend in this situation?
As this is the real thing, rather than a simulation, I can't provide command decisions, jurisdiction and so on. But if you want to talk in terms of an examination of tactical assessment techniques...
As you can see, by using the long-range stand-off observers to survey the setting, you can assemble a model of their POV, and exploit their visual...
Two Homeguard personnel were wounded and one killed in apprehending armed radicals in the Tawo district today. An EDF advisor who was reported to be providing technical assistance was also injured. State investigators will examine the incident to check for active EDF participation, which would be in violation of current treaty.
H'lo...
See, you're not dead.
Umph, feel like it.
So.... still love me?
Oh? Think you can win me with hurt-comfort sympathy?
It's a try.
EF 238


And if not, we've decided to gang up on you. Toki thinks I'm the kind of bad influence you need to become a well-rounded parental unit.
Well, I think he's already helped me get more "well-rounded" than I expected.
You want me to get domesticated and all, "for the good of the child."
But I still need to maintain my command and pilot's rating. And since I seem to be the only one maintaining a clear head about things, here are my thoughts.
I've found a really good care group.
Even if you two are going to help me, we need others who are not in service to be available for the child if things get busy.
And these people have experience with kittens, something you only children and my dysfunctional sibling relationship don't have.
I have five sibs!
Your family was an anarchists' convention, not the kind of thing to emulate for a future Felna.
I'm sorry, Afon. I still don't know what to make of you. While this is your child too, and I would never deny you to be its father, I really, really don't know if I can live with you.
Well, we'll find out soon enough, I've requested that I be released to joint quarters with you.
You maneuvering creature you, knowing I can't leave a wounded troop in the street.
EF-237





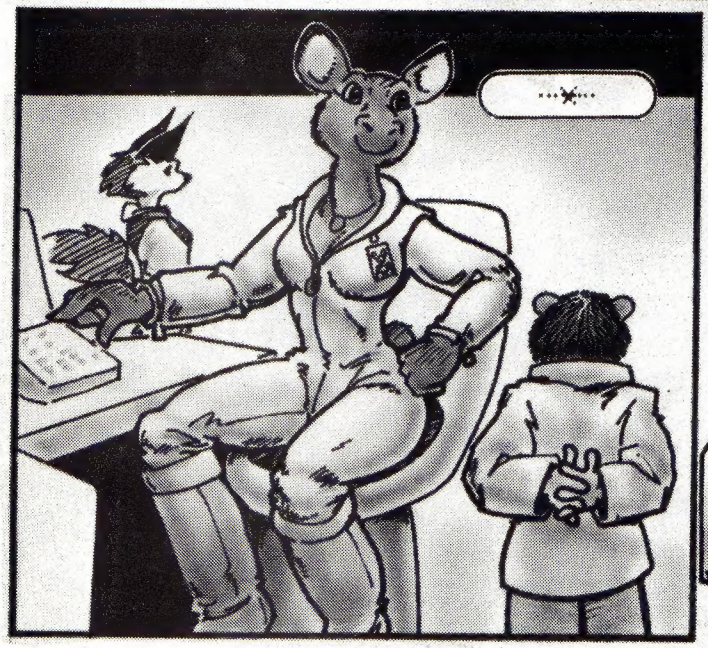
Hai! That was an odd bit.
Must have been one of those memory dreams. I hope the Net can figure out where they come from.


Hoo! I've no recollection of that memory.
Perhaps I have a subconscious memory of Kanoc's memory... It is a wonder.
EF - 240

Off to find my daily bread.

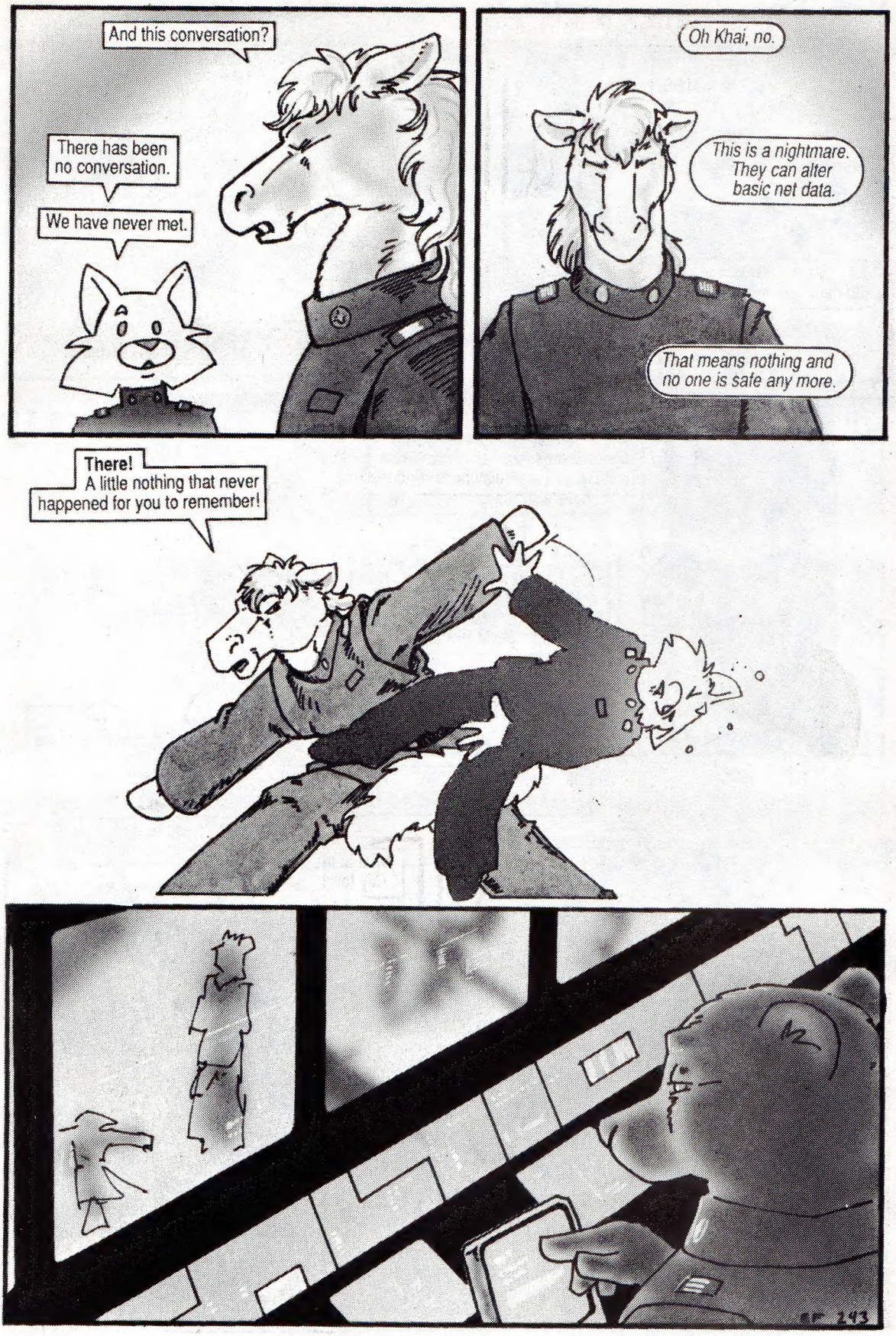
I should go to the campus... Do some studying. I really should be more productive.

This parasitic life is so vexing.
Some of the Rim Worlds are less inquisitive about employability.



But as I hope to remain... though I lack any real direction as to how to assist young Erma....

SD197-11-02 High orbit transit station, Arras Charka
SERVICE TO CENTER CITY DEPARTING IN 40 MINUTES.
About time to go.
A few more days to go and the worst will be over..
Captain Arrat. A word please.
You are?
That is not important.
What do you mean!? Lt. Taho - If you have some business with me, you will state it and respond to my questions.
I don't think you understand, Captain. You have nothing to report.
Your original observations on the Chishata incident are a matter of record and there are no subsequent facts to present to Higher Headquarters.
What?!
You have nothing to report.
What of the PF-30 and all that on Aeleta Station? My follow-up reports, and those of my crew?
The record will show that, aside from what must have been a temporary psychological shock due to your losses at Chishata, you have done nothing, aside from making your way here, no doubt to indulge in some personal dramatics related to the incident and the matter of your new command.
EF 242


And this conversation?
There has been no conversation.
We have never met.
Oh Khai, no.
This is a nightmare. They can alter basic net data.
That means nothing and no one is safe any more.
There! A little nothing that never happened for you to remember!

Meanwhile, Confed Special Facility, Center City, Arras Charka

SHATO. CRITICAL NEWS. ELEMENTS WITHIN THE EDF HAVE CORRUPTED THE BASIC NET.

That's impossible.

NOTHING IS TRULY IMPOSSIBLE WITHIN THE NET. I COULD DO IT MYSELF.

So what happened?

THE ENTIRE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS AFTER CHISHATA HAS BEEN REWRITTEN. AS FAR AS HQ KNOWS, ASIDE FROM SOME DISMISSALBE ODDS AND ENDS, CAPTAIN ARRAT IS HERE MERELY TO RECEIVE HIS NEW COMMAND.

So that's why the follow-up interrogations never happened. By undoing Chishata, they must have also worked on Ekosiak.

I SUSPECT SO. LARGE BLOCKS OF CURRENT LOCAL DATA HAVE BEEN LOCKED OUT AND IT WILL TAKE TIME TO GET NEW DATA FROM EKOSIAK.

We have got to get out of here.

If they can rewrite history, they can do anything to me that they want.

YOU AREN'T TRYING TO RUN AWAY FROM YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES?

Is this some kind of test? I have been prepared to accept the full measure of the law for all that I have ever done. But with this, the institution itself is now a lawless instrument of ambition.

I SUGGEST YOU CALM DOWN A BIT.

What for? Can even you guess what will happen to me? To the Confed itself with what may well already be happening? I want to get out of here, and out of Confed space as fast as I can. You and I know that I can do absolutely nothing here to save anything. My only personal hope is to get out to the rim somewhere and help them safe their systems from the same thing happening to them.

Are you going to help, or just observe?

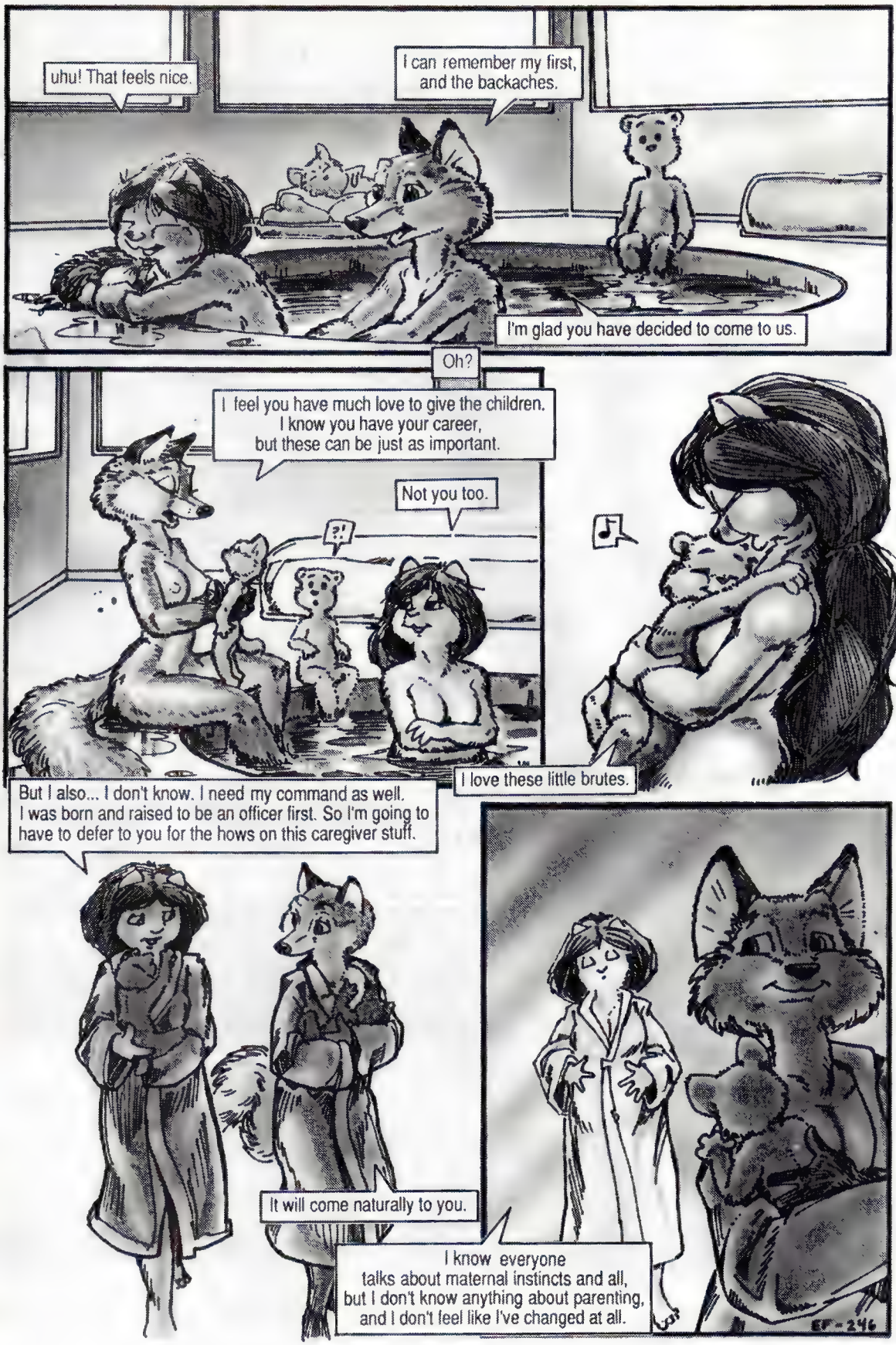
I'M THINKING ABOUT IT.

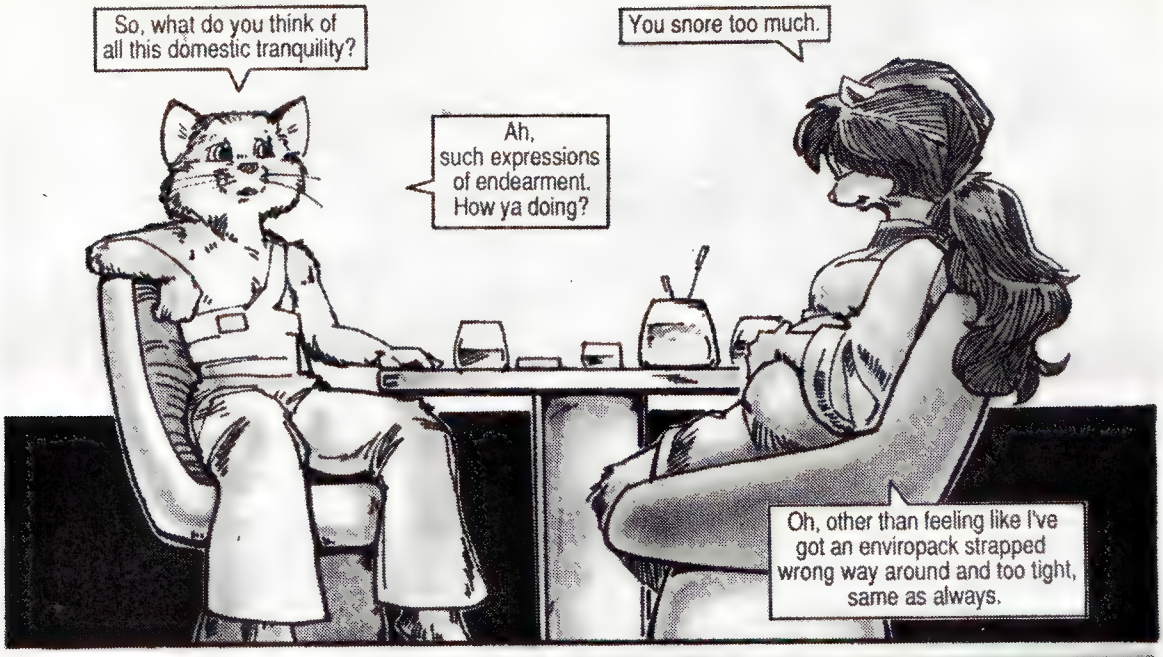
And while you think about it, I'm going to get out of here.

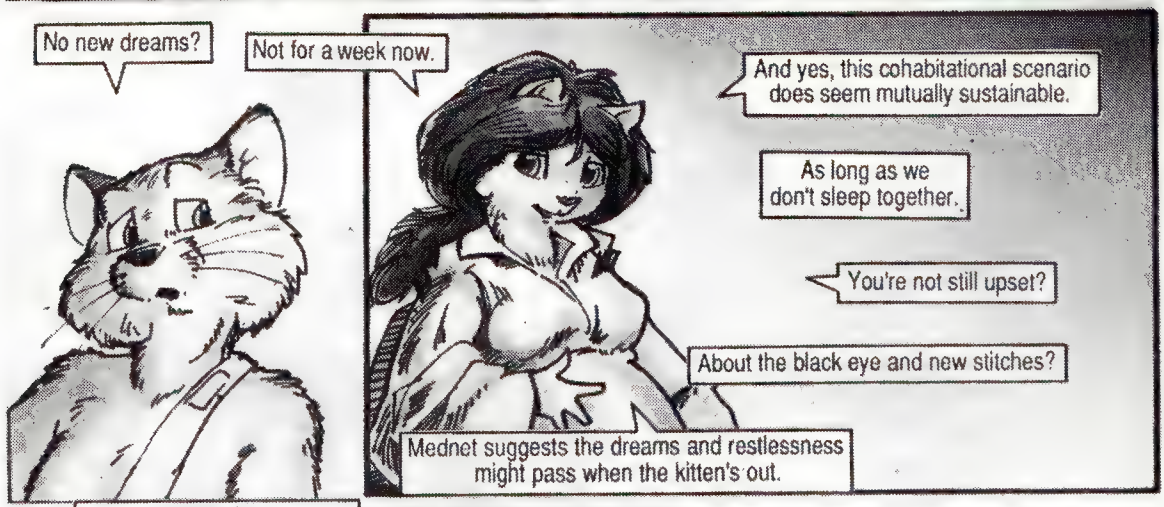
I HAVE SOME POSSIBLE OPTIONS. LET'S TALK.

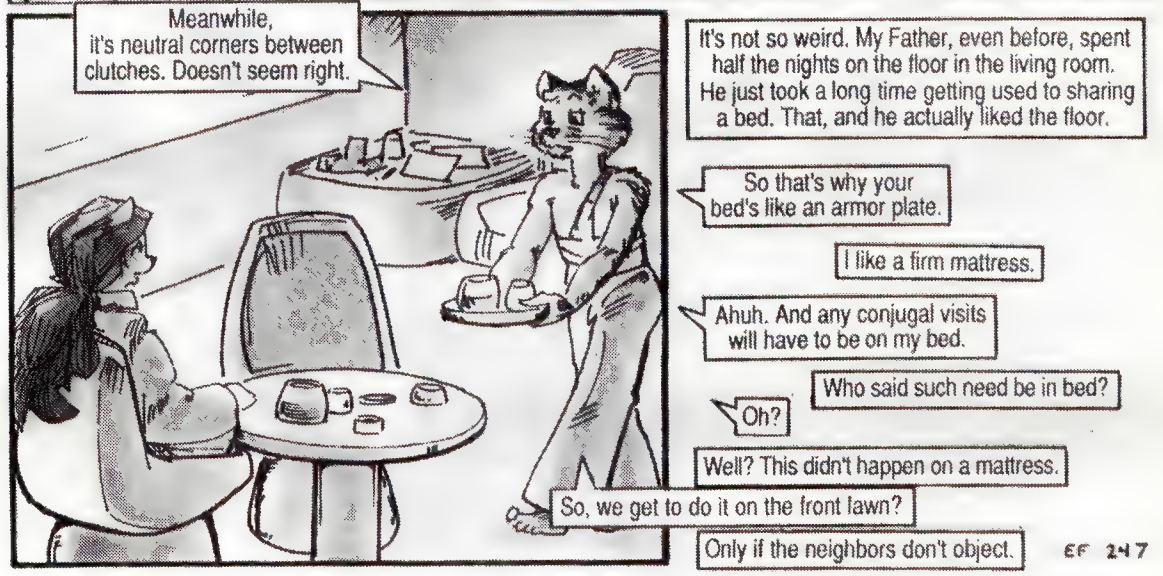
EF·244

Ya know, it wasn't suppose to work out this way. You were suppose to do the flying.
Well, I'm getting stuck with the paperwork.
But that doesn't require gee-suit check out. Urk!
Ssssit!
Have fun.
While this could be a review for some of you, it is still a good exercise.
Any questions before we start?
Yes, Commander.
Do you have a name for the child yet?
Will you be going inactive?
Is it a boy?
Have you gotten your care group settled?
- ah - Well... I can assure you I have made reasonable accommodations for myself and my child. I appreciate your concern, but we do have to get back to business. Any further questions?
Have you gotten back together with Afon?
You'll be nursing, won't you?
Is it a girl?
Will you be needing a babysitter?
EF-245


uhu! That feels nice.
I can remember my first, and the backaches.
I'm glad you have decided to come to us.
Oh?
I feel you have much love to give the children. I know you have your career, but these can be just as important.
Not you too.
?!
I love these little brutes.
But I also... I don't know. I need my command as well. I was born and raised to be an officer first. So I'm going to have to defer to you for the hows on this caregiver stuff.
It will come naturally to you.
I know everyone talks about maternal instincts and all, but I don't know anything about parenting, and I don't feel like I've changed at all.
EF-246


So, what do you think of all this domestic tranquility?
Ah, such expressions of endearment. How ya doing?
You snore too much.
Oh, other than feeling like I've got an enviropack strapped wrong way around and too tight, same as always.


No new dreams?
Not for a week now.
And yes, this cohabitational scenario does seem mutually sustainable.
As long as we don't sleep together.
You're not still upset?
About the black eye and new stitches?
Mednet suggests the dreams and restlessness might pass when the kitten's out.


Meanwhile, it's neutral corners between clutches. Doesn't seem right.
It's not so weird. My Father, even before, spent half the nights on the floor in the living room. He just took a long time getting used to sharing a bed. That, and he actually liked the floor.
So that's why your bed's like an armor plate.
I like a firm mattress.
Ahuh. And any conjugal visits will have to be on my bed.
Who said such need be in bed?
Oh?
Well? This didn't happen on a mattress.
So, we get to do it on the front lawn?
Only if the neighbors don't object.

So that is the situation.

With the general net now compromised, nothing is safe, and I for one, must consider my career over.

Do you really think we would suffer some manner of abuse?

My point is that we could never know or have any recourse if it is so.

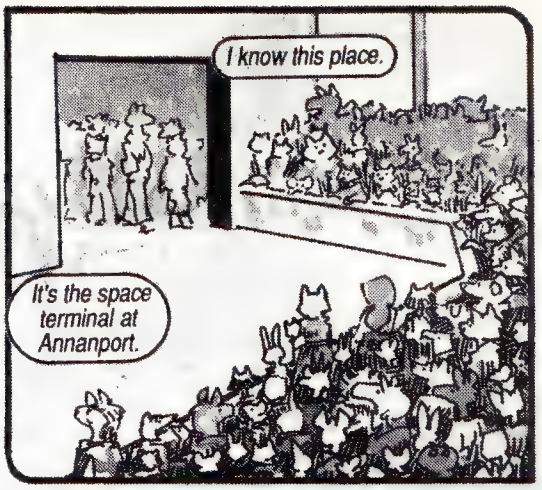
So, Captain, do you have any suggestions? Our lives are now virtually over, according to your assessment. And what of our families?

I can only tell you what I will do.

The outer rim is unconnected with the Confed net and ought to be safe. Opportunities abound, and with officially secured and untainted personal files, one could do well out there.

I wish you all well.

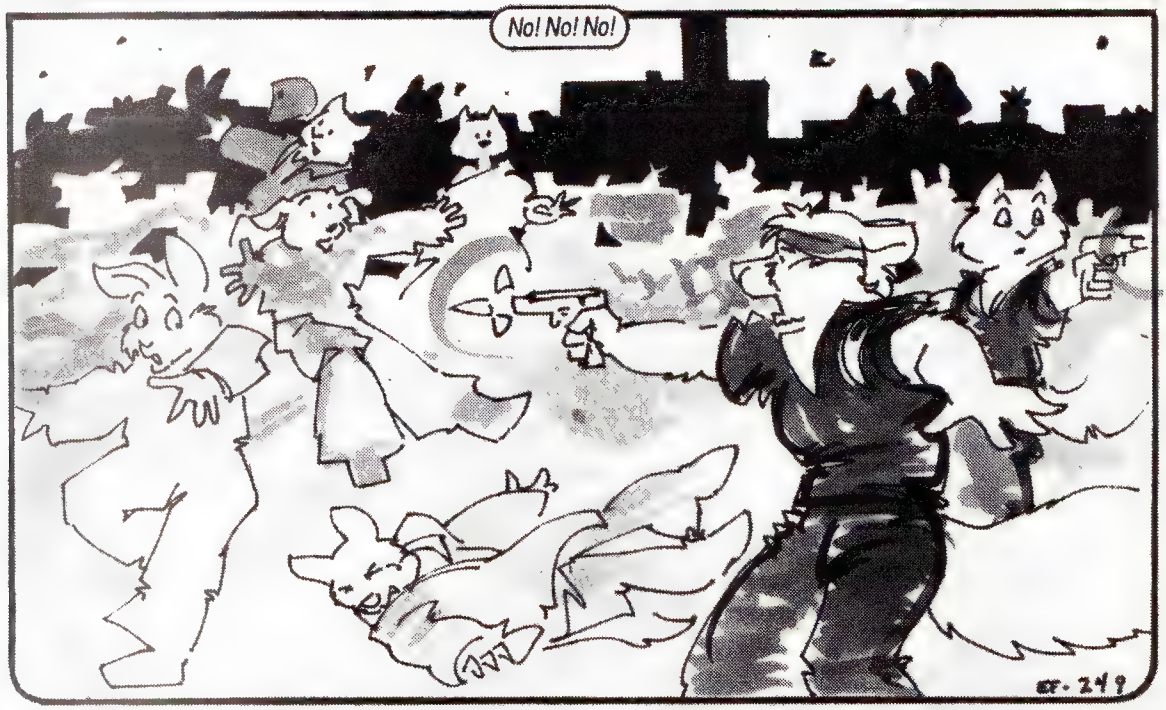
Where?
When?
Another one of those dreams.

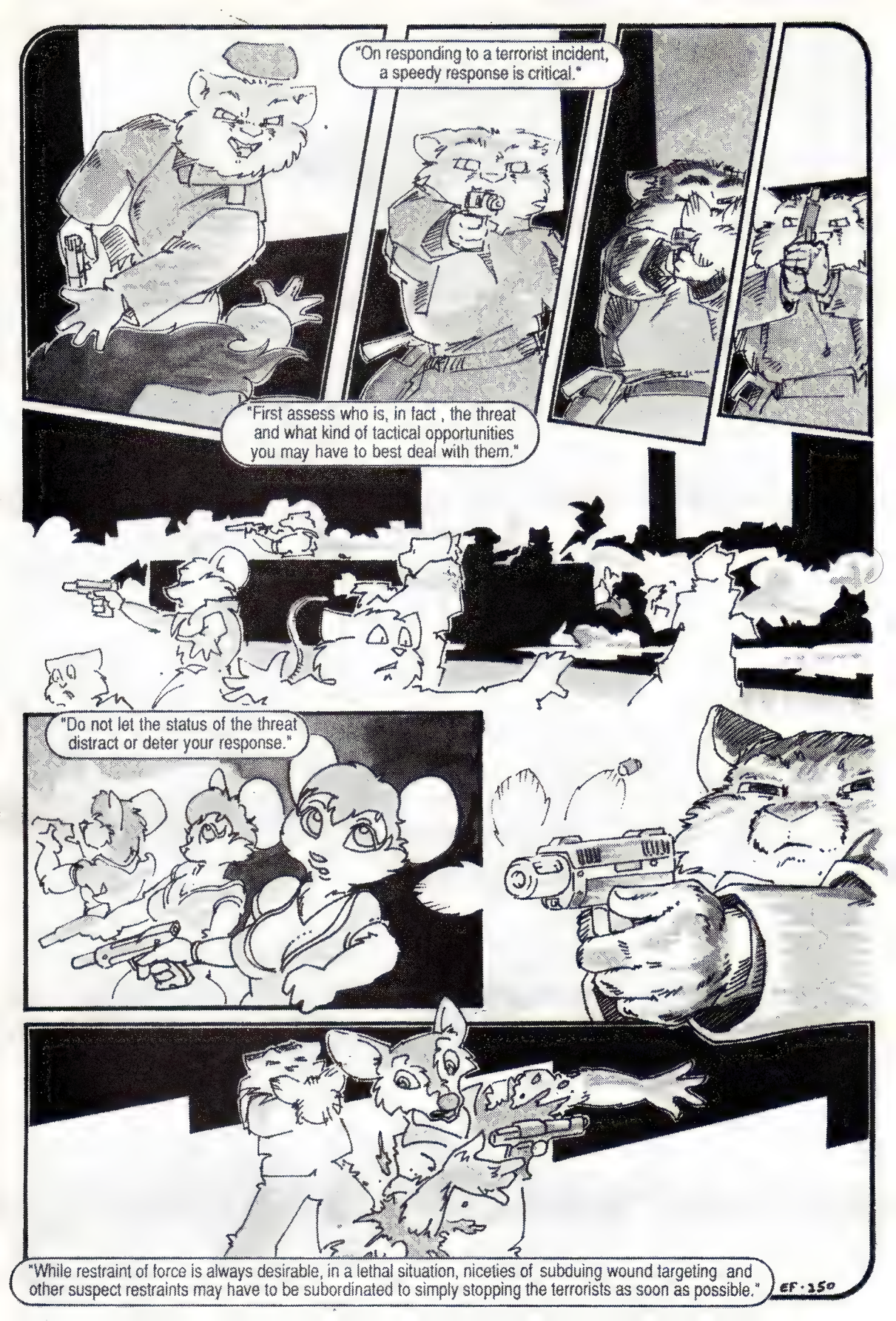

I know this place.
It's the space terminal at Annanport.

Mother?
She's pregnant.
She's so young.
This must be, but it can't.

-uhnnnnn..
I've never seen her... but...

Look out! Do something!
Wake up! Please, wake up!


No! No! No!


"On responding to a terrorist incident, a speedy response is critical."
"First assess who is, in fact , the threat and what kind of tactical opportunities you may have to best deal with them."
"Do not let the status of the threat distract or deter your response."
"While restraint of force is always desirable, in a lethal situation, niceties of subduing wound targeting and other suspect restraints may have to be subordinated to simply stopping the terrorists as soon as possible."
EF·350

"However, haste should not come before bystander safety, lest the intent of the exercise be undone."

Ugh!

ANOTHER BAD DREAM?

Yeah! Ahg! It was awful! The Annahport terrorist action.

YOU WERE BORN THERE. AGAIN, WAS IT FROM YOUR FATHER'S POINT OF VIEW?

Yes - oog! Though right now I feel more like it was my Mother's.

Ak! I've wet the bed.

OOOH?

Oh! Computer, I've broken water. And I'm not due for weeks. What do I do now?

THE STRESS OF THE DREAM MUST HAVE INITIATED LABOR.

BE CALM. I HAVE AN ASSISTANCE UNIT EN ROUTE NOW.

PUT ON THE MEDMONITOR SO WE CAN TRACK YOUR PROGRESS.

I MAY NOW HAVE AN EXPLANATION FOR YOUR DREAMS, BUT THAT CAN WAIT.

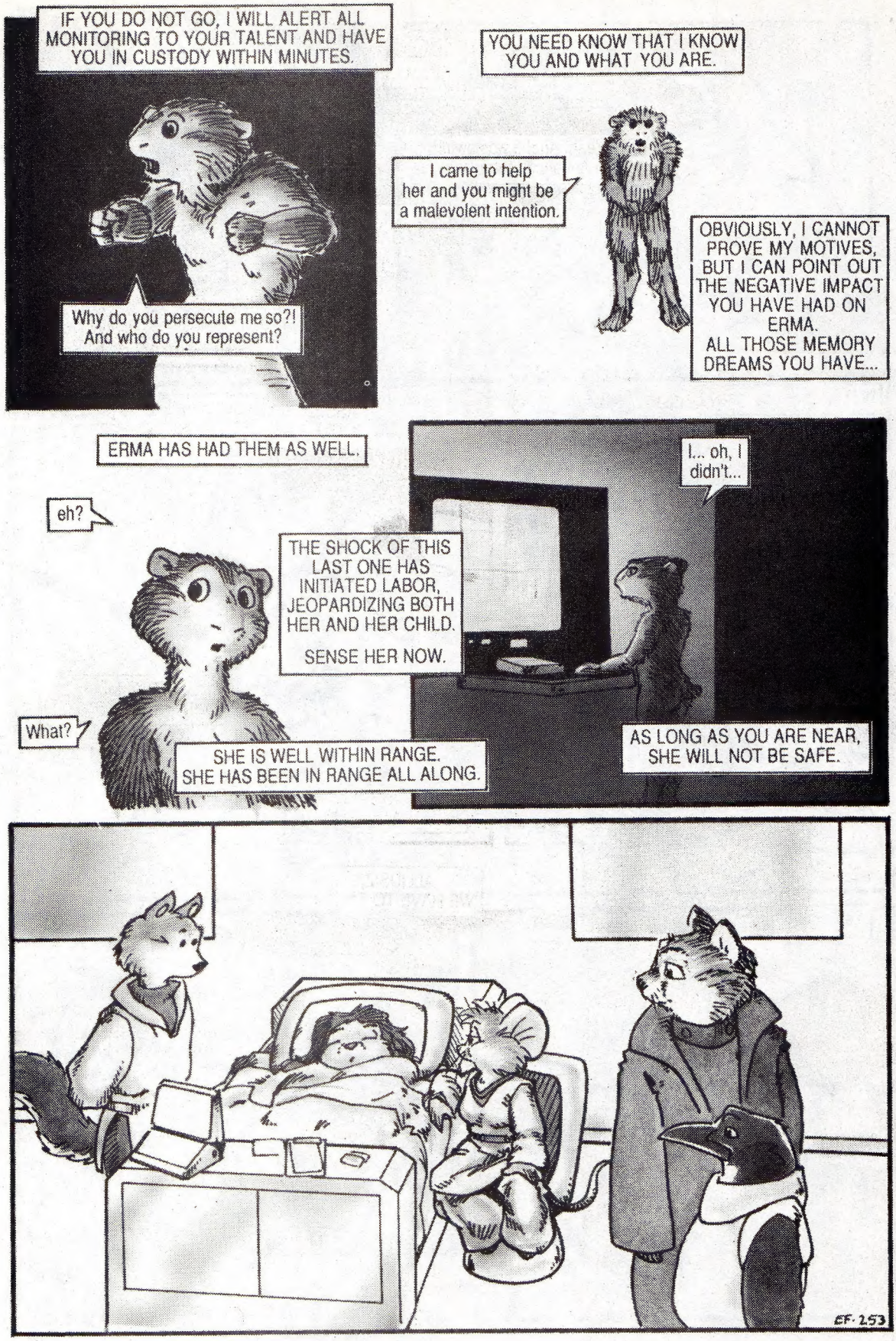
AIEE, what an awful dream! I hope I never have another like that!

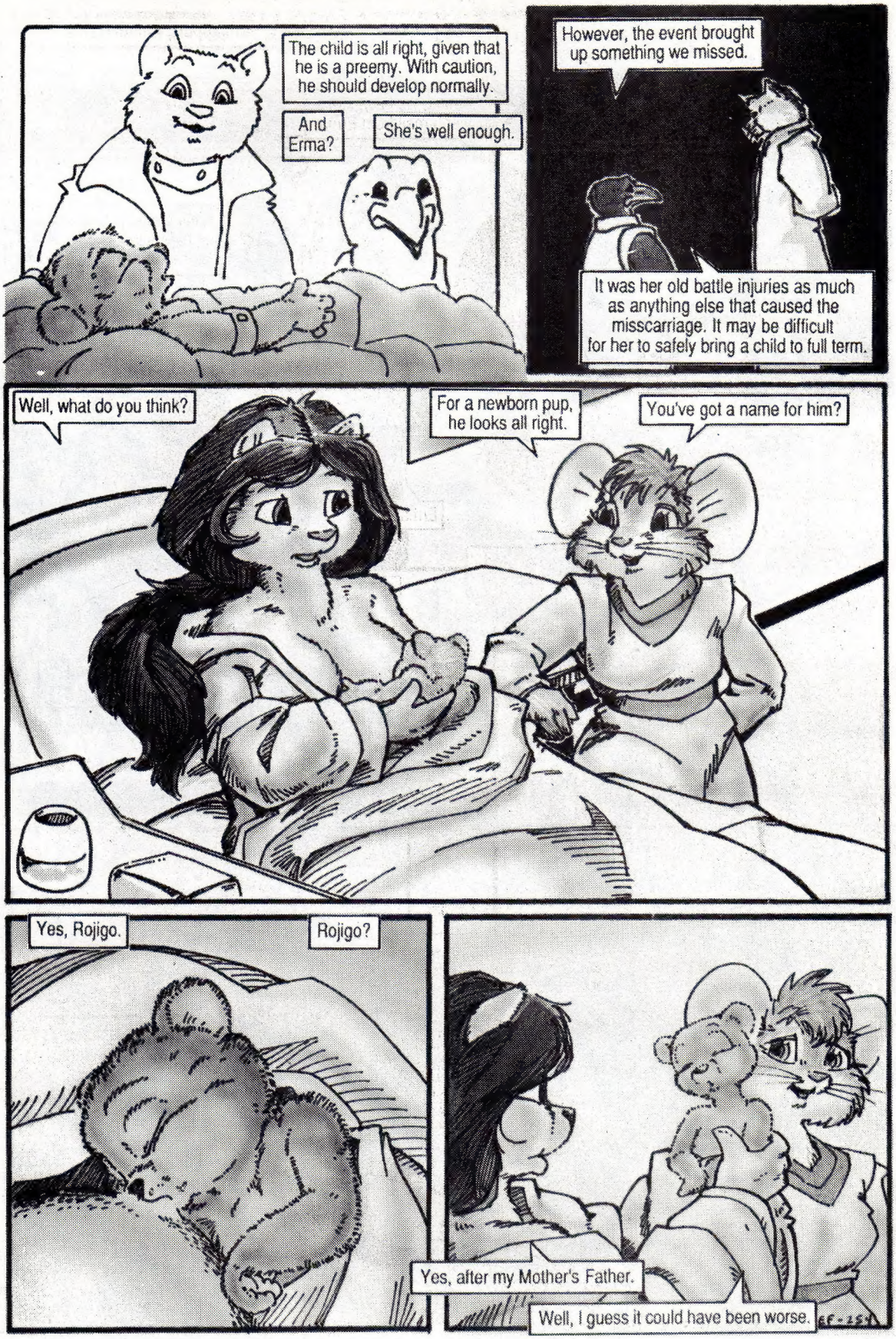
BEEP BEEP

ALLIUSIZ, WE HAVE TO TALK.

Who? What?

I KNOW WHY YOU'VE COME AND WHAT YOU HOPE TO DO. BUT ALL YOU'VE DONE IS PUT HER AT RISK. YOU SHOULD NOT HAVE LEFT ARRAT. HE NEEDS YOU MORE THAN EVER. AND IN HELPING HIM, I HAVE SCHEDULED YOUR IMMEDIATE DEPARTURE.


IF YOU DO NOT GO, I WILL ALERT ALL MONITORING TO YOUR TALENT AND HAVE YOU IN CUSTODY WITHIN MINUTES.
Why do you persecute me so?! And who do you represent?
YOU NEED KNOW THAT I KNOW YOU AND WHAT YOU ARE.
I came to help her and you might be a malevolent intention.
OBVIOUSLY, I CANNOT PROVE MY MOTIVES, BUT I CAN POINT OUT THE NEGATIVE IMPACT YOU HAVE HAD ON ERMA.
ALL THOSE MEMORY DREAMS YOU HAVE...
ERMA HAS HAD THEM AS WELL.
I... oh, I didn't...
eh?
THE SHOCK OF THIS LAST ONE HAS INITIATED LABOR, JEOPARDIZING BOTH HER AND HER CHILD.
SENSE HER NOW.
What?
SHE IS WELL WITHIN RANGE. SHE HAS BEEN IN RANGE ALL ALONG.
AS LONG AS YOU ARE NEAR, SHE WILL NOT BE SAFE.
CF-253


The child is all right, given that he is a preemy. With caution, he should develop normally.
And Erma?
She's well enough.
However, the event brought up something we missed.
It was her old battle injuries as much as anything else that caused the misscarriage. It may be difficult for her to safely bring a child to full term.
Well, what do you think?
For a newborn pup, he looks all right.
You've got a name for him?
Yes, Rojigo.
Rojigo?
Yes, after my Mother's Father.
Well, I guess it could have been worse.

198-04-27 Anniahport, Annah (Dornthant II)

Kanoc, we have some video mail from Erma.

Have you ever watched the steam that comes off individual drops of tea?

Erma?

Uhmm, don't get too excited. I wonder what she has to say?

Hello. I've got some special news. And here he is. I didn't want to tell you about him until I had something definite to say. His name is Rojigo. He was born on SD 198-01-23, a bit early but no complications. The father, Afon Voga -- you remember him, don't you' mother?

-- and I are working on some manner of care scheme. I don't know if I want to get married to him, or anyone, any time soon, but for now, I guess I'll be with him for a while.

I've gotten in with a wonderful care group; they remind me of the Teswahnii that helped with Tasak.

Hey "Uncle," heard about your sister. Congratulations.

Yeah, I guess.

Yeah, Felna. A new generation of the dynasty. And when are you going to get a future EDF troop in?

What?! Uh- not yet.

Khai! Can't I ever get out from under Erma? She's my curse!

Say, is that? If it is.

Yes, it is.

And I think I've got a brilliant opportunity.

Tasak? Tasak Felna?

Huh? Oh? Commander?

Tavas, Tavak Ikalik.

Relax. And how are you, my boy? I've heard good things about you. Shame the bureaucracy doesn't recognize true talent. So, looking for an improved posting? Sure you are. Ambitious fellow needs a fat situation to get me serious rank. It ain't what you know but who you know. Sur He's the situation. I'm on my way up, way up, ar obvious I'll need staff. And where I go my staff will go too. Homeguard to EDF or Con postings happen all the tim If you play your cards right, who knows where you might go.